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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002505

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MODIFICATIONS BUT NO BREAKTHROUGH ON SUNNI ARAB
CONSTITUTIONAL INCLUSION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James F. Jeffrey for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: June 13 was another day of negotiations on Sunni Arab inclusion on the Constitution Committee. Negotiators modified their positions, but did not resolve their disagreements. Deputy Constitution Committee Chairman Adnan al-Janabi told the Charge that he felt "plus 15" (i.e., total of 17 Sunni Arabs) was a reasonable number of additions but complained that irresponsible statements from President Talabani and the Sunni Waqf had driven the number up. He requested that Talabani retract his support for 25. We spoke to Talabani's chief of staff who pointed to his statement to the media on June 12 as having clarified that Talabani was not committed to any particular number. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) leader Muhsin Abd al-Hamid reduced his demand to 20 representatives in a separate June 13 meeting with Charge. He said that he feared that going any lower would open his party to charges that the IIP was selling out Sunni Arab interests. Abd al Hamid agreed to discuss the issue with his colleagues. Charge emphasized, and Hamid agreed, that a quick resolution of the issue would speed the path to Iraq's next elections. End Summary.

JANABI SAYS HE'S "DEADLOCKED"

3. (C) Adnan al-Janabi said that felt "deadlocked" between hardline stances by the Shia leadership and his own Sunni Arab colleagues. Shia leaders who publicly called for adding only 11 Sunni Arabs to the committee provoked Sunni Arabs for no reason he said. That led leaders like Adnan Dulaymi to announce an unrealistic goal of some 25 additional members, he said. Meanwhile, President Talabani's public statement June 8 indicating support for 25 additional Sunni Arabs only hardened their position. Janabi warned that continued delays on the issue had brought the matter near a "crisis" point and Sunni Arab leaders were considering publicizing their grievances and withdrawing from the process.

4. (C) Janabi said he considered 15 additional Sunni Arabs to be a reasonable number but would need help pressuring the Sunni Waqf and Iraqi Islamic Party. He also asked the USG to weigh in with Talabani and ask him to retract or moderate his support for 25 additional Sunni Arabs, a stance that was complicating negotiations. He claimed that he saw the possibility that Talabani would push all sides to add 16 Sunni Arabs, for 18 total. In any event, Janabi urged the USG to consider statements that would help Sunni Arabs agree "without losing face." He specifically mentioned the idea of emphasizing the principle of consensus and allowing additional Sunni Arabs join the process as non-voting consultants and experts.

TALABANI WITHDRAWS HIS SUPPORT FOR 25

5. (C) After the Janabi meeting, we contacted Presidential Chief of Staff Kameran Qaradaghi who pointed out that his June 12 public statement had distanced the president from the demand for 25. Qaradaghi said that Talabani's previous statement was "misunderstood." He added that Talabani was most concerned that all members of the Committee be equal and was not in a position to set numbers.

IRAQI ISLAMIC PARTY DROPS TO 20

6. (C) Iraqi Islamic Party leader Muhsin Abd al-Hamid stuck hard to 25 representatives in a separate June 13 meeting with Charge but had dropped to 20 by the end of the meeting. IIP Secretary General Tariq al Hashemi acknowledged that Talabani

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had changed his position. Abd al Hamid claimed that if he went any lower, competing Sunni groups would attack him for selling out their community's rights. He claimed that even the call for 25 representatives was less than the Sunni Arabs deserved. He made the familiar specious argument that the 42 percent of Iraqis who did not vote in January were all Sunni Arabs, meaning that their community should have

representation of that proportion on the Constitution Committee.

17. (C) Abd al Hamid said that he strongly supported meeting the August 15 deadline and believed that new elections were the surest path to improving Sunni Arab participation in politics. He warned that Shia politicians would try to miss the deadline so as to extend their own time in power. Hamid said his party had only nominated legal experts to the Constitutional Committee, consenting to add one political representative, Ayad al-Samarai, only at the insistence of the Shia leadership.

18. (C) COMMENT: We now have heavy Sunni hitters like TNA Speaker Hasani and Janabi both pushing for an additional 15 Sunni Arabs, and the gap between them and the Iraqi Islamic Party crowd has narrowed to five. All parties are discussing this relentlessly and we will keep communications ongoing. What is behind all of this of course are decades of misunderstanding and distrust, horrific Ba'athist rule, and a perceived need by all parties to score points in a particularly rigid zero sum game. Thus even when we resolve the numbers dispute, the names themselves may be another issue. We will continue to urge The Iraqi Islamic Party and National Dialogue Council to improve their communications to resolve the numbers argument. We anticipate further developments over the next two days as the TNA convenes and the Constitution Committee meets. END COMMENT

19. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.
Jeffrey